

A "Marked Down" Mania Restricts Progress in Seattle

Schlock Shops and Reputable Stores Advertise on Same Basis

One Specialist in Fake Sales Fined and Run Out of Town—"Hoax Houses" Plentiful—Vigilance Committee Needs Local Advertising Club—News-papers Make Fair Showing, with The Star Trailing

By SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

Seattle, Wash., June 3.—Seattle is a city with a kink in its brain. It is bargain-struck. It chases a commercial wisp. In the face of repeated disillusion, it still believes with a pathetic and childlike trustfulness that "something for nothing" is a sound business principle. "Below Cost," "Marked Down," "Sold at a Loss," "Special Bargain," "Fifty Per Cent Off Actual Values"—these are the articles of its simple faith. These are the catchwords of its typical advertising. The merchants of Seattle (with a few notable exceptions) are still telling fairy tales in print to the women of Seattle, and the women of Seattle are still running madly about from store to store, like so many innocent little rabbits with bunches of carrots brandished under their innocent little noses on all sides, almost frantic with indecision as to where they can most profitably nibble. To be sure, the carrots are mostly "bargain" carrots, and therefore unsatisfying to the palate. But when once the purchasing public has become fixed in the rabbit-minded practice of nibbling at bargains nothing else has a strong enough appeal.

Hence Seattle has become firmly addicted to the "dope" of values, marked down prices and special or bargain sales. They tell a story here of a city "boosting" committee which, being desirous of getting out some advertisements to exploit Seattle's advantages, sent for the advertising manager of a local department store and asked him to sketch out a page ad for newspaper use. He began readily enough with the catch line:

"Seattle's Population Has Reached the 350,000 Point" and fell into a brown study. When the committee looked over his shoulder to observe his further progress they found that force of habit had inspired the further line:

"Marked Down from 400,000."

On the streets and in the newspapers alike the fairy-tale type of merchandising is preëminent. One store will start the week with a "Great May Sale" of hats and suits. Another will jump into the lists with an "Anniversary Sale" of cloaks and underwear. Seeking for a new term of appeal, a third will exploit a "Move Day Sale" of incredible values, while a fourth perpetrates a "Special Value" sale, and others come in with "Everything Special," "Sample Sacrifice," "\$120,000 Fire Sale," "Unparalleled Bargain Offers," and so on. Nor are these the fly-by-night type of store which flares into print for a week, only to disappear, taking its plunder with it. For the most part they represent permanent merchandising. The result is that the shopping element of the city vacillates from one store to another, in search of the vaunted specialties, and none of the merchants practicing this sort of appeal is able to build up a trade which his rival in the next block cannot pull away from him, temporarily at least, by a louder blare on a bigger bazoo. Inevitably the first merchant is thereupon forced to "speed up" his advertising and distend his claims in the effort to get the rabbits of trade away from the other fellow's carrots back to his own. And so the rivalry of lies continues and increases. Nowhere else in my investigations have I found mercantile advertising in a condition where it is so difficult to distinguish between the lowest grade schlock shops and the standard department stores, from the nature of their "copy."

As noted above, there are exceptions, the two distinctive ones being Frederick & Nelson's and the Bon Marché. The former maintains the most carefully codified guardianship against misrepresentation in advertising that I have yet encountered. It absolutely bars claims of value and comparative prices, and has done so for many years. Nor does this apply to its advertisements alone. No marked down tickets are to be found on its goods. Nor are its sales force allowed to quote former prices. Further, the word "Bargain" and the claim of special sales are rigidly tabooed from the store's advertising, with one exception in favor of its furniture department, the twice-a-year sales of which are an almost historic event in Seattle, since the concern started as a furniture store. In the midst of the Calithumpian brass band value chorus of the other establishments it might be supposed that Frederick & Nelson's quieter voice would be lost. Quite the reverse is true. Though the firm has not, probably, the largest trade in the city, it has the most stable. One of the newspaper advertising experts gave me a clear view of the effects of absolutely straight advertising in an environment of the other kind.

"You won't find Frederick & Nelson's ads creating such a rush as some of the others. But the others will get a one-day crowd and the rest of the week the salespeople in the special lines can play checkers, if the floorwalker isn't looking, while a Sunday ad of Frederick & Nelson will be pulling just about as strong on Thursday as it did on Monday."

Another store which is fast turning from the error of trick advertising is the Bon Marché. A short time ago it was firmly committed to the "value" theory of salesmanship. In its recent advertising I fail to find any direct value claims, though there is an occasional comparative price quoted. This practice, however, is being reduced to a minimum, as is also the "sales" and "bargain" type of exploitation. It is interesting to note, as part of the advanced standards of the store, this sign conspicuously displayed in the drug department:

"We do not recommend patent medicines unless prescribed by a physician."

Nowhere have I heard a more candid opinion of the evils of "sale" and "bargain" emphasis in advertising than from Mr. Frank McDermott, president of the Bon Marché Company.

"This business of ours," said he, "was built up on the special sale principle. Now we're rebuilding it on a sounder principle. The bargain stimulus has been overdone in this city, and we've been among the offenders. We're through. It's a bad practice; it defeats its own end, and we're sick of it. The stores have been miseducating the public into demanding something for nothing;

and each store has been grabbing at something new to get the public with. We intend to get up abreast of the times."

As between Frederick & Nelson and the Bon Marché, representing the newer principles of retail business, and the practitioners of the old style, the fight for the town's trade promises to be interesting. While I was in Seattle McCormack Bros. were splurging on a "\$120,000 Fire Sale" in which appeared such items as \$24.50 Coats for \$14.98, \$4.98 Skirts for \$2.98, 25 Cent Hosiery for 19 Cents, and so on. MacDougall-Southwick's "May" sale offered sport suits of the value of \$39.75 for \$25; cloth suits valued at \$35 for \$19.75, and \$5 blouses at \$1. From the Rhodes Company advertising before me one might infer that this concern has no regular trade worth considering, since practically all its offerings are "special": \$2.50 corsets for \$1.39; "regular" \$7.50 hats at \$1.95, and dresses "marked to sell" at \$19.50, here specialized at \$10. "Formerly" is the catchword of the Fraser-Paterson Co.'s "Moving Day Sale" at which skirts, "formerly" \$7.50, could be had for \$3.85; hats, "formerly" \$10, for \$3; middie blouses, "formerly" \$1.75, for 98 cents; and \$4 waists for \$1.38.

In the specialty shops the same methods prevail. "The Pulling Power Is Value," shouts the Lundquist-Lilly establishment in loud type, and expects its readers to believe that they can get \$40 suits of clothes for \$25 by simply going "upstairs." The Florence, another upstairs shop, offers \$30 garments marked down to \$13.75 at its first anniversary sale. This shop, by the way, exhibits a remarkable forwardness in its "anniversary," since it has been in business about three months only! Hays, the Sale Wizard, is another fancy advertiser. He offers an "Eastern Manufacturer's Entire Surplus Stock of 2,000 Pairs of High Grade Sample Shoes." Two thousand pairs of sample shoes would, indeed, be a surplus for any manufacturer. But small considerations such as facts do not influence the wizardry of Mr. Hays. H. M. Rogers is also a sale wizard of shoes and clothing. In his headline he offers Walkover Shoes for \$1.98. And he has them in stock; a few decrepit pairs of vague age. However, I have yet to learn of any one who has been able to get fitted with a Walkover Shoe at Mr. Rogers's Red Front Store; and most of his stock is a truly lamentable collection of odds and ends.

For a time Seattle supported an advertising genius who specialized on fake sales of merchandise. His name is George Francis Rowe, and I am informed that he is now operating or preparing to operate in New York City. (Tribune Bureau of Investigations, kindly note.) When a schlock operator had collected a particularly unsalable lot of trash, Mr. Rowe would be called in to write the advertising and sell it off, it is said, on a percentage basis. After several successful adventures in this field, he exploited one sale so "raw" that the Post-Intelligencer turned down the advertising, and took Mr. Rowe's comments upon its action in decidedly ill part. In fact, the newspaper sent a reporter down to investigate the sale.

"We will sell everything in stock at cost or less," Mr. Rowe was advertising.

The prices asked didn't appear to the Post-Intelligencer reporter to bear out the claim. He made some purchases, including a shirt "Value \$1.50," for \$1.10. The same shirt was purchased at a neighboring store for \$1. It was a \$9 a dozen article of very poor workmanship. Mr. Rowe was arrested and fined \$25. He departed from Seattle, but his footprints are still plainly marked upon the local sands of time. You may see them, conspicuous on all the principal shopping streets. In my casual wanderings I met with the following instances of fakery:

A Closing Out Sale, which had been closing out for six months. A Creditors' Sale, which was alleged to be the "Biggest in Town." It was old enough to be, having been in progress for nearly a year. A "Colossal Mercantile Eruption," which looked like two "Bankrupt Salvage" sales, respectively seven months and a year old. One sale of fake United States Army and Navy goods. One "Trustees' Sale" exhibiting counterfeit Poroskint underwear in the window. A clothing auction of pure junk. A jewelry auction, ditto. A "Monster Sacrifice Sale" of men's shoddy clothing. Half a dozen sample shops in shoes, hats and women's wear. And a \$10,000 Free Museum of Anetomy, for "Men Only." All these, blotching up Seattle's respectable business streets with their disreputable signs and placards. And, apparently, the reputable merchants lack either the energy or courage or foresight to make any effective protest.

What, then, about the local advertising club? Has it no voice in the matter? It has a voice—and that's the extent of its powers. There's nothing to back up its protests. The Seattle Advertising Club is without a vigilance committee; and an advertising club which attempts to protest against bad conditions without a vigilance committee to back its protests is like a bee with a buzzer but no stinger. The bee can bluff; so can the club; but that's about all. The secretary of the club is supposed to look after vigilance and corrective work, but he has no funds to back him, nor is his a paid office. Further, no help is to be expected from the leading merchants of the place. They are cynically and, as it seems to me, stupidly indifferent to trade conditions which must in the long run affect them unfavorably.

For example, some months ago a men's furnishing store advertised a "failure" sale. When most of the stock had been disposed of, and business was still brisk, the proprietor brought in an assortment of trash, seconds, damaged goods and odds and ends, part of which had been knocking about Seattle and neighboring towns for months, and proceeded to work it off on a gullible public. Complaints came in to the Advertising Club from the landlord of the place, who objected

to having his premises used for such purposes; also from neighboring stores. The Advertising Club secretary, an energetic and interested worker, visited the place, found conditions even worse than represented, and set about getting action. He went to half a dozen of the principal clothing concerns in town to get their help. Would they send expert buyers with him to point out the best evidence to buy? No; they couldn't spare their men. Would they furnish expert testimony in court, if he got the evidence? No; they didn't care to appear in court proceedings. Well, would they make up a fund to cover the expense of getting the evidence, and let him do the rest? Sorry; but they couldn't see their way to contribute money for such a purpose.

Discouraged, but not defeated, the secretary went ahead by himself. He investigated the stock, traced up part of it to its sources and wrote a letter to the manager of the sale quoting the law—Washington has a modified form of the Printer's Ink statute—and threatening action. It was pure bluff. The bee had no stinger. But the fake sale manager didn't know that. The thing buzzed like a bee at one end; he inferred that the other end was equally bee-like. So he quit. Vigilance work, thanks to one lone, unsupported individual's persistence, scored.

Cheered up by this, the official then went after one of the biggest department stores in town, which had been advertising "White Fox" furs at an absurd price. This time he succeeded in enlisting the services of an expert from another store, who examined the fur and uttered a code word which was to be the signal for purchasing. The code word was "Miaow"! On the sales slip which the vigilance worker received was written "White Fox," but the ticket on the fur read "White Fur." The ticket was correct. It was "white fur"—of the "miaow" species. A letter was written to the store. It was ignored. A second letter followed, quoting the law. The advertising of "White Fox" abruptly ceased. Later an attempt was made to check the prevalent practice of filling in department store silk sales with obsolete "sticker" designs and short lengths, but this met with poor success. So far as I can discover, this represents about the total of Seattle's vigilance work in recent times.

Outside of the store world there is a good deal of dishonesty in local trade. Since leaving New York and the area infested by Mr. Bennett's pink Telegram I have seen no such amount of "hoax-house" advertising as in Seattle. The method is precisely the same as that to which the Bennett papers have habituated New Yorkers. In fact, the ads might have been copied from the Telegram, with only the addresses changed. "Going East: Must sell at once my high-grade seven-passenger car; as good as new." "Widow, lately bereaved, must dispose of household furniture," and so on. Of course, the articles for sale are "planted" by regular dealers. In the automobile trade practically all of the second-hand business has been done on this fake basis, with the result that the public has become suspicious and the trade has fallen off badly. Whether it ever did really pay is a question. One of the largest dealers in town who had used this method for years, in the prevalent belief that it was the only feasible way to get rid of second-hand cars, abandoned it in favor of straight advertising a few months ago. He tells me that his sales in this department have more than doubled. Taken in conjunction with the success of the modernized advertising of Frederick & Nelson and the Bon Marché, this would seem to indicate that Seattle is getting tired of being fooled.

In a city whose store advertising so lags behind the times it might be inferred that newspaper standards would be low. This is not the fact. The average would compare favorably with Portland, and is far above San Francisco or Los Angeles, though one local paper, The Star, of the Scripps Northwest League, is one of the most vicious examples of daily journalism in the country. All of the Seattle papers present an unsightly appearance because of the glaring type and claims of the bargain fends in print. Even The Post-Intelligencer, which attempts to maintain a certain standard of appearance, suffers from these eruptions. In other respects, however, the "P.-I." as it is locally called, has been a real influence for improvement. In financial advertising it is scrupulous. Up to four years ago it accepted stock promotions with closed eyes and open hands. Then came the big local oil "boom," mostly fake. For a time the "P.-I." took the ads, then woke up to the disastrous effects of them, particularly upon the poor, threw them all out and opened up a campaign which, practically drove the "blue sky" promoters out of the field. In the course of the proceedings it added the interesting fact that the editor and the

advertising manager of The Seattle Sun (since defunct) were taking pay in the stock of one company and were running a little investment concern of their own to get rid of it. Having set foot on the right financial path, The Post-Intelligencer went on cleaning up. It dropped dubious mining and land ventures. It did accept Ford Tractor at first, but the financial editor protested so vigorously that the advertising was thrown out even before the A. A. C. W. report appeared. Any kind of stock promotion desiring space in The Post-Intelligencer nowadays encounters a distinctly Missouriish attitude on the part of the advertising management; it must be prepared to "show" them.

Medically it is not so free from reproach. But even here it is cleaner than the average big newspaper, and is improving year by year. Four years ago it dropped out all abortion, venereal, cancer and consumption cures and "free advice" matter. Since then it has eliminated matrimonial ads, and such disgusting and shocking exploitations as the catarrh and asthma cures. It refused admittance to the "beauty prescriptions" of the notorious quackesses Valeska Surratt because the agent demanded that it be published without the "adv." mark; and though it accepts S. S. S., Bon Opto and Hostetter's Bitters, it discriminates against claims of cure by these or other medical advertisers.

The Times is reasonably careful about financial advertising, but careless on the medical side, admitting Kline's Epilepsy Cure, Pink Pills for Pale People, Nuxated Iron, and even the "Chinese doctors," though it censors the latter copy to the extent of eliminating the venereal claims. No venereal or lost manhood "dopes" are permitted in its columns.

The Star is the bad actor in the local field. Lost vitality, sexual stimulants, abortion pills (guaranteed), Chinese quacks, the "matrimonial" traps which panders set in print for heedless girls—all this kind of filth, besides a horde of standard fakes, is welcome, at a stated price, to The Star. How low this particular Scripps publication is ready to dredge in the gutters of advertising may be judged by the following "personal":

"Ladies in Trouble, save time and money by calling at — Broadway."

Should a live vigilance committee ever be established, there is missionary work waiting for it in the columns of The Star.

What is going to happen in Seattle? At a guess I should say that the era of fake is coming to a close. The corrupt advertising which has preyed upon the public for so long shows signs of dying of the poison which it has itself engendered. This would be a satisfactory outcome if the poison did not infect, as it does, honest advertising and merchandising as well. The Seattle public has become wary of what it sees in print. The bargain rabbits are losing their faith in the favor of those much vaunted carpets. In consequence the stores, with an increasing gross profit each year, show a decreasing net profit. Even the most stentorian claims now fail to pull. Said one notorious "kike" merchant, who assumed (on what basis I don't know, as I certainly didn't tell him so) that I was an advertising expert of the Rowe type:

"In the old days I could run a page and sell from \$500 to \$2,000 gross per day on it. Now the papers are raising rates on our kind of copy. And the public won't respond any more. This town is on the blink."

If the town is, indeed, "on the blink" for the schlock merchant, then this is the time for Seattle's sound merchants to get behind the Advertising Club and push. Concentrated, determined vigilance work could clean up the place. One newspaper has already done a little of it, and would probably back the movement. Further, Seattle is in for a real boom, a war boom. Its vast shipbuilding yards are working overtime. It has great lumber and fishing interests. Wages are high, and there is every reason for putting local trade on a solid foundation of truth and reliability.

Seattle has long been chasing rainbows. It has been a marked-down city. It will never attain its full mercantile development until it works itself up to the marks, as they are.

MAXIMUM SERVICE AT MINIMUM COST
HOTEL VAN RENSSELAER
13-19 East Eleventh St. 2 doors east of 25th av.
Refined and quiet, with a domestic atmosphere, catering to a discriminating clientele only.
Leases now being made for suites of one room, with bath, to six rooms and three baths, for periods covering 8 to 12 months from October 1.
\$10 MONTH AND UPWARD, on yearly rentals.
DINING ROOM CONDUCTED ON THE AMERICAN PLAN.
Home Cooking Our Specialty.
Meals at \$16.50 weekly per person.
C. E. McGINN, Manager.

Summer Nights at Shanley's

are as cool and comfortable as those you spent in mid-winter. This is due to the arrangement of the place—its size and system of ventilation.

Keep cool and watch the twenty act cabaret—evenings seven to one.

Unequalled—the seven course luncheon—85c (Music) From 12 to 2:30 P. M.

SHANLEY'S
Broadway—43rd to 44th St.

HEARN

Fourteenth Street West of Fifth Avenue

BUSINESS HOURS 9 TO 6.
Closed Saturdays During July and August, as Originated by Us 17 Years Ago.

Summer Satisfaction Is Our Aim

We Differ from Other Stores, Because Our Stock-Taking Occurs at End of Summer

Unequalled Varieties NOW

THE FOLLOWING FOR BOTH MONDAY AND TUESDAY:

Pretty Frocks at Special Prices



New Navy Taffeta Frocks

White satin collars and cuffs—great pearl buttons—all sizes for women and misses.

Special
14.75

Tub Frocks for 3.75

Simple one-piece gingham dresses—box pleated poplin frocks, dainty voiles—most cool feeling frocks everyone agrees—in floral patterns and stripes, in light blue, rose, tan and brown. Embroidered collars and cuffs of batiste. Serviceable out of door dresses; combinations of gingham and chambray. Sizes for women and misses.

Cool Frocks at 7.75

Sheer voiles in light blue, pink and green, and polka dots and stripes; as well as striped voile, with dainty net collars and vests, and ribbon belts. Shirtwaist dresses in corded voiles—sport frocks in plain colors, braid embroidered. All sizes for women and misses.

Fine Frocks at 21.50

Simple models of white Georgette crepe—other frocks of crepe de chine—and effective styles in charmeuse. Simply made; some lace trimmed, or with folds.



An All White Frock

A combination of voile and novelty fabrics—all sizes for women and misses.

Special
9.75

Blouses

Dainty and Sheer and So Surprisingly Priced

Voile Blouses

All white or in plain and effective combination stripes—large collars and cuffs of white organdy—simple but becoming style. Our reg. 89 cts.

Special .68

Voile and Organdy Blouses

Tucks, embroidered and hemstitched sailor collar and cuffs—or Venice and Val. lace trimmed collar, cuffs and square-neck vestee. Our reg. \$2.85.

Special 2.24

There Are So Many Patterns in These Various Gingham

.38 At this price you find the finest of imported ginghams—colorings really lovely—great plaids—blocks and stripes. The blues are especially striking. There are so many patterns of pinks, blues, rose, tan and almost every possible combination of colors—other ginghams—from the primest stripe design to the most dashing plaid.

.15 .19 .22 and .25
VOILES, 20,000 Yards at .17

Of really fine texture, too—but what interests you is the "delightful differentness" of the patterns—simple allover floral designs, but so new—effective patterns in black and colors—other dainty light ones in blue, pink and green. Stripes and figures—Oh, dozens of designs.

A Material for Sturdy Clothes—Percales

Stripes and figures—ever so many styles.

.14 .17 .19 .21

WASH GOODS DEPT.—BASEMENT.

HINTS

For Soldier, Sailor and Vacationist FROM OUR STATIONERY DEPARTMENT

Combination Pen and Pencil.....	5	Paper Baggage Tags.....	4
Pocket Pencil Sharpener.....	5	Leather Baggage Tags—each.....	9
Army and Navy Note Paper.....	9 and .22	Leather or Web Straps.....	.10 to .1.20
Small Size Play Cards.....	.15	Snapshot Album.....	.25
Card Form Dominoes.....	.18	Mucilage, Paste or Glue (tubes).....	8
"Pit" or "Flinch".....	.39	Initial Cards and Envelopes.....	9
Pocket Prayer Books.....	.15 and .25	24 in box.....	9
Scapulars.....	5	50 Flag Seals.....	3
Sacred Heart Badges.....	2 for 5	Fountain Pens—safety self-filler—including clip.....	.75
Losary Beads.....	.15	Lead Pencils—Red, white and blue—dozen.....	.36
Scapular Medals.....	8	Combination Sets—pencils, eraser, penholder, ruler and drinking cup.....	.37
Combination Case—Crucifix, scapular medal, prayer and address card.....	.44	Smaller sets without cup.....	.21
Book of Common Prayer.....	.25	Assorted Rubber Bands.....	.10
New Testament.....	.27	115 Sheets of Writing Paper.....	.17
Writing Pads.....	9	Envelopes to Match.....	7
Envelopes for above.....	9	Drinking Cups—pkg. of 25.....	8

All Sorts of Swimming Togs Here for Every Member of the Family

Men's SILK NECKWEAR

Greatly Reduced

.38

Our reg. .48 and .64. All Open Ends. Stripes and figures—in very effects—large ends—long band.

Semi-made Skirts

2.95 to 8.92

All-Wool French Serges, Mohair Silverblooms—Plain or pleated in striped, plain and plaid fabrics to 38 waist.

In Dress Goods Dept.

See Herald, World and American for thirty (30) Morning Specials on sale Monday and Tuesday until 10.